

# MARYLAND BIRDLIFE

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Volume VI

March - April, 1950

Number 2

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Send field notes and other material to your local staff member, or direct to Editor Chandler S. Robbins, Patuxent Research Refuge, Laurel, Md.

# SPECIAL ARTICLES

## MARYLAND CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS 1948-49 and 1949-50

During late December and early January within the State of Maryland 12 Christmas Bird Counts were made the winter of 1948-49 and 16 in 1949-50. This compares with 13 made the winter of 1947-48, a summary of which was published in Maryland Birdlife, Vol. 4, No. 1, Jan.-Feb. 1948.

Details on all counts except for those taken at the Patuxent Research Refuge in Prince Georges County will be found in the appropriate issues of Audubon Field Notes. All the counts prescribe to the requirements stipulated for Christmas Counts except that the Patuxent Refuge counts were made in January after the specified period.

The counts, particularly this past winter, provide a very good coverage of the varied habitat found in Maryland. This coverage included the Allegany ridges and the Catoctin Mountains; sections of the Piedmont; the four major impoundments, Deep Creek, Pretty Boy, Loch Raven, and Triadelphia Reservoirs; the Susquahanna Flats and the upper reaches of Chesapeake Bay (Chase); the lower Potomac River at Accokeek and at the junction of the Wicomico River; the wooded Patuxent River bottoms; the eastern shores of Chesapeake Bay (Kent Island, Blackwater Refuge, and Crisfield); and the ocean shores and coastal plain in Worcester County.

In this summary and the tables, subspecies such as the Yellow Palm and Western Palm Warblers have been lumped together and the Greater and Lesser Scaups have been treated likewise.

The state-wide totals of species observed each of the past three winters indicate that the Christmas Count coverage in Maryland is steadily improving. The number of species recorded were: 1947 - 127; 1948 - 139; and 1949 - 147. The largest single count was made in the Ocean City area (Worcester County) on December 27, 1948. A total of 123 species was recorded, and this is the largest Christmas count ever obtained in the East north of southern North Carolina. Higher counts have been made only in North and South Carolina, Florida, Texas, California, and Mexico.

The combined total list of species for the past three winters is 162. Of these 113 were seen all three years; 25 on two out of the three years; and 24 on one year only.

That 24 species have been seen only one year may be attributed to two factors. Some species are of accidental or casual occurrence while others occur regularly but are overlooked by the observers. The 24 species, divided according to the foregoing, are listed below:

Species Seen Only Once in Three Years

<u>Casual Occurrence</u>	<u>Present but Overlooked</u>
Harlequin Duck	Gannet
Eider (sp)	Ruffed Grouse
Goshawk	Ring-necked Pheasant
Osprey	King Rail
Ruddy Turnstone	Clapper Rail
Semipalmated Sandpiper	Sora
Western Sandpiper	Long-eared Owl
Forster's (?) Tern	Saw-whet Owl
	Seaside Sparrow

The wild Turkey, an uncommon, local permanent resident has not been recorded. The following species, which might be expected, have not yet been found on a Christmas Count: White-fronted Goose, European Teal, Knot, Black Skimmer, and Dovekie.

In the accompanying tables are listed the number of individuals of each species observed during the past two winters. Numbers in brackets represent species seen during the period but not on the day of the count.

In considering the counts for the past two years it is interesting to note that 6 species were seen on every count both years and that 4 were missed only once in two years as follows:

Observed all counts both years:

Downy Woodpecker  
Crow  
Chickadee (Black-capped or Carolina)  
Cardinal  
Eastern Goldfinch  
Slate-colored Junco  
Song Sparrow

Missed once in Two years:

Red-tailed Hawk  
Tufted Titmouse  
Starling  
English Sparrow

The following occurred on 75% or more of counts both of the past 2 years:

Black Duck  
Turkey Vulture  
Sparrow Hawk  
Flicker  
Hairy Woodpecker  
Blue Jay  
Brown Creeper  
Carolina Wren

Mockingbird  
Eastern Bluebird  
Golden-crowned Kinglet  
Eastern Meadowlark  
Tree Sparrow  
Field Sparrow  
White-throated Sparrow

For the purpose of comparing the terrain and habitats the counts have been roughly divided into three major groups as follows:

THE COASTAL AREAS

The Christmas Counts which have a coverage of large areas suitable both for land and water birds are Ocean City, Blackwater Refuge, Kent Island, Susquehanna Flats, and Chase. Counts in Anne Arundel County and the Wicomico areas that would be comparable with the others in this group should be possible.

The Ocean City count is the only one that includes a segment of the ocean and outer beaches and thus has the edge on other areas with such species as Gannet, Red-throated Loon, Holboell's Grebe, Brant, sea ducks, Purple Sandpiper, other wintering shorebirds, and Ipswich Sparrow. Sinepuxent Bay provides habitat for about the same species as Chesapeake Bay. All the other areas take in sizeable segments of Chesapeake Bay with its concentrations of waterfowl. The number of species per count in these areas should run from 65 to 100.

#### THE RESERVOIR AREAS

These include Loch Raven, Hampstead (Pretty Boy), and Triadelphia. Patuxent Refuge is included in this group as it contains a few small impoundments and does not tie in readily with the other groups. Garrett County does include Deep Creek Lake but is not placed in this group as the lake is usually frozen and thus does not contribute additional species to the count. The three reservoirs are all in the Piedmont, while the Patuxent Refuge is in the upper reaches of the Coastal Plain but well removed from Chesapeake Bay.

The habitats are mostly woods, pastures, cultivated fields, and streams but very little marsh. The impoundments attract small numbers of water birds but far fewer species than the Bay. The number of species for these areas should run from 45 to 65.

#### THE UPLAND AREAS

From east to west these are the Catoctin Mountains, Allegany County, the McCoole area, and Garrett County.

These areas are higher, colder, and drier and the habitats are not likely to attract and hold lingering individuals of species which generally winter further south. The wild Turkey and Ruffed Grouse, however, are found only in these areas. The Carolina Chickadee of the other areas is largely replaced by the Black-capped Chickadee. The chances for northern visitors, however, are not any better than in the other areas. Few water birds occur except for occasional American Mergansers, Black Ducks, Great Blue Herons, and Kingfishers. The species count for these areas is from 25 to 50.

In comparing the various counts it is well to keep in mind that the coverage has varied considerably. A complete census should cover as thoroughly as possible a circular area with a diameter of 15 miles and should be conducted from dawn to dusk. The Accokeek census has included only two square miles and been covered by not more than four observers exclusively on foot. The Chase census has had adequate man power but been restricted both as to area and time. Most of the counts north and west of Washington and Baltimore have not had sufficient observers but have endeavored to cover the full areas. On the Eastern Shore the Crisfield area is not sufficiently different from Southern Dorchester County to warrant a census. If more fully covered by more observers Kent Island might challenge Blackwater as the second most productive area in the State for number of species. The Susquehanna area, with its concentrations of waterfowl and blackbirds, leads the State for numbers of individual birds and with fuller coverage by more observers might in a favorable year top the country.

This past year western Maryland had the best coverage of any year to date but it was made by observers from the eastern part of the State. The new units of the Maryland Ornithological Society in Allegany, Washington and Frederick Counties should undertake regular Christmas counts in their respective areas in future years.

Seth H. Low.

MARYLAND CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS, 1948 AND 1949

Species	Yr.	Gar Co.	Mc Cool Co.	All Mts.	Cat Mts.	Hampstead	Loc Rav	Tri Res	Patu xent	Acco keek	Wico mico	Anne Arun Chase	Susq Flats	Kent Is.	Blk wtr	Cris fld.	Ocean City	Total
Common Loon	48						1	1						1			4	7
	49													1			26	27
Red-throated Loon	48											1					15	16
	49																48	48
Holboell's Grebe	48																2	2
	49																1	1
Horned Grebe	48										73	35		1	199	7	25	340
	49						5				13			8	98	2	48	310
Pied-billed Grebe	48												1	5		1	5	12
	49	1						2			21			26	27	2	6	85
Gannet	49																6	6
D-cr. Cormorant	48																1	1
Great Blue Heron	48										2	2		4	18	15	17	58
	49										3			1	1	19	26	52
American Egret	48															1		1
Blk-cr. Nt. Heron	48															1		1
	49															2		2
American Bittern	48															1		1
	49															2	2	6
Whistling Swan	48										20		401	840	3005	39		4305
	49										351		1243	4100	1700			7554
Canada Goose	48										32		50	485	1660	2140	2030	6397
	49							159	63		18		1	7530	3783	2406	1	17051
Brant	48																10000	10000
	49																50	3475
Snow Goose	48																1	1
	49																(1)	
Blue Goose	48															1		2
	49																2	2
Mallard	48						2	384		4	36			354	52	225	22	733
	49				11			300	150	16	6		28	1240	2	496	31	2333
Black Duck	48						16	90	4	100	414	17	598	1446	830	530	1280	5325
	49			31	17		45	200	40	50	96		582	5930	1345	2398	140	11689

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Species	Yr.	Gar Co.	Mc Cool Co.	All Cat Mts.	Hamp- stead	Loc Rav	Tri Res	Patu xent	Acco keek	Wico mico	Anne Arun	Chase	Susq Flats	Kent Is.	Blk wtr	Cris fld.	Ocean City	Total
Gadwall	48									1095			18					1113
	49									1889			36	8	75			2008
European Widgeon	48												1					1
	49														1			1
Baldpate	48									2670		7000	323	2415	10		11	12429
	49									691		1119	4830	3165	88			9893
Pintail	48									550			168	38	3		78	837
	49							4		396		2	460	3	73	1	26	965
Green-winged Teal	48									5			1	(2)			17	23
	49							2					60		219	12	63	356
Blue-winged Teal	49														5			5
Shoveller	48												15				3	18
	49														13		9	22
Wood Duck	48																5	5
	49			2				4							5	2	12	25
Redhead	48						2			145		200	80	535			12	974
	49									8		99	12	7050		2		7171
Ring-necked Duck	48									78		2	426	154				660
	49						6						730	10	766		4	1516
Canvas-back	48								3	5300	4	10	4935	2770	54		105	13181
	49								1	1664		90	4070	3040	20	1	82	8968
Scaup Duck (sp.)	48									10	1100	4	776	148	50		540	2628
	49									1022		836	34		760	2	203	2857
Am. Golden-eye	48									116	75	5	44	196	260		387	1083
	49									136		8	151	1066	1	42	162	1566
Buffle-head	48					1				27	42	14	34	41	90		650	899
	49									3		1		78	2	32	138	254
Old-squaw	48								1	1	23		3	131	25		270	454
	49						2							135		23	438	598
Harlequin Duck	49																1	1
Eider (sp.)	48																1	1
White-w. Scoter	48										11			9			350	370
	49													44		40	415	499
Surf Scoter	48																1300	1300
	49															11	895	906

Species	Yr.	Gar Co.	Mc Cool Co.	All Cat Mts.	Hampstead	Loc Rav	Tri Res	Patu xent	Acco keek	Wico mico	Anne Arun	Chase	Susq Flats	Went Is.	Blk wtr	Cris fld.	Ocean City	Total
American Scoter	48													1			270	271
	49																196	196
Ruddy Duck	48									2070	6880	527	48	2	46		27	9600
	49						5			1166		7	525		4	1	15	1723
Hooded Merganser	48					1		(1)		6				10			2	19
	49						20					1			70		6	97
American Merganser	48					76	41	58	160	242	1	4	8	61	46		1	698
	49			8		6	60	20	20	2		19	26		35	2	2	520
Red-br. Merganser	48									3	6		3	13	1		347	373
	49									20			20	13	2	10	462	527
Turkey Vulture	48					11	42	25	6	49	124	7	26	243	90		383	1011
	49		3	21	24	13	81	3	15	27		53	206	60	34	400	438	1378
Black Vulture	48						11	3	10	13	6			1			2	46
	49						(2)		16	1		2	1				4	24
Sharp-shinned Hawk	48							1					2		2		1	6
	49	1						1	2	1		1			1	4	4	15
Cooper's Hawk	48							1					2	4	3		2	12
	49			2			1	1				1		1	4	8	7	25
Red-tailed Hawk	48					1	1	2	3	11	1	4	6	9	9		8	55
	49	3	1	1	7	3	10	4	2	7		5	11	7	6	12	12	92
Red-should. Hawk	48							2	1	3	1		1	2	9		3	22
	49			1	3		3	12	3			1	2	1	4	3	6	39
Rough-legged Hawk	48									1		1		1	1		1	5
	49			2											1	2	1	6
Bald Eagle	48							3	5	10	4	14	11	1	11		2	61
	49						1	2	10	3		10	6	4	13	7	2	58
Marsh Hawk	48							(2)	2	21	4	6	3	23	21		10	90
	49			1	9	4	1	8	2	8		9	5		39	31	21	138
Pigeon Hawk	49											1						1
Sparrow Hawk	48		1			2	7		1	8	7	2	3	19	6		15	71
	49		2	7	10	5	18	2	2	1		3	17	9	1	14	21	113
Ruffed Grouse	49	7	2	1	1													11
Bob-white	48							4	9	15				11	1		30	70
	49		12	(1)	1		35	25	35	5				1	7	13	11	145
Pheasant	49												1					1

Species	Yr.	Gar Co.	Mc Cool	All Co.	Cat Mts.	Hampstead	Loc Rav	Tri Res	Patu xent	Acco keek	Wico mico	Arne Arun	Chase	Susq Flats	Kent Is.	Blk wtr	Cris fld.	Ocean City	Total
King Rail	49															20			20
Clapper Rail	49															4	1		5
Virginia Rail	48																	1	1
	49															3			3
Sora	49															3			3
American Coot	48									3060	1200	500		235	1700	2		108	6805
	49							1					8050					8	8059
Killdeer	48									6	35			3	1	9		131	185
	49					4		6		16	12		53		15	12	27	189	334
Bl-bellied Plover	48																	32	32
	49																	21	21
Ruddy Turnstone	48																	1	1
Woodcock	48																	1	1
	49															1		3	4
Wilson's Snipe	48								1		6					2		1	10
	49							1								6	3	9	18
Gr. Yellow-legs	48															2		1	3
	49															24	2	1	27
Lesser Yellow-legs	48															5			5
	49															4			4
Purple Sandpiper	48																	14	14
	49																	6	6
Least Sandpiper	48																	5	5
	49																	6	6
Red-backed Sand.	48																	305	305
	49															40	13	538	591
Semipal. Sandpiper	49																	32	32
Western Sandpiper	48																	10	10
Sanderling	48																	366	366
	49																	244	244
Black-backed Gull	48															2		14	16
	49															3		18	21
Herring Gull	48								3?	5	143	185	123	54	310	84		960	1867
	49							2		3	167		79	156	1231	203	53	1028	2922
Ring-billed Gull	48									25	5	7	20	21	375	15		174	642
	49								3	15	36		578	185	82	91	102	181	1273

Species	Yr.	Gar Co.	Mc Cool Co.	All Cat Mts.	Hampstead	Loc Rav	Tri Res	Patu xent	Acco keek	Wico mico	Anne Arun	Chase	Susq Flats	Kent Is.	Blk wtr	Cris fld.	Ocean City	Total
Laughing Gull	48													1				1
	49													1				2
Bonaparte's Gull	48									1	7			8			13	29
	49																5	5
Caspian Tern	48													(1)				
Forster's Tern	48																2	2
Mourning Dove	48						2	82	75	48							91	298
	49				12		42	173	40			15	2	1	35	12	265	597
Barn Owl	49														2			2
Screech Owl	49	1	1	1													1	4
Great Horned Owl	48						2								5		1	8
	49	9		1	1												1	12
Barred Owl	48							2	1			1			1		1	6
	49	1		1	1		1	1	1						3		2	11
Short-eared Owl	48																1	1
	49														4		2	6
Saw-whet Owl	49														1			1
Belted Kingfisher	48					1			3	5				4	4		5	22
	49			3		2	1	2		5		2	1	1	4	3	5	29
Flicker	48					3	2	30	20	17	2	6	1	4	5		53	143
	49		1	1	12		6	68	14	5		16	7	2	5	18	45	200
Pileated Woodpkr.	48							2	1						8		17	28
	49	4	3	4				7	1	1					3	5	5	33
Red-bellied Wood.	48						3	21	13	9	3	5	1	5	4		36	100
	49				4		9	56	14	1		4	9	1		4	12	114
Red-headed Wood.	49												1					1
Sapsucker	48									1			(2)				4	5
	49							1	2				2			1		6
Hairy Woodpecker	48		1					8	6	2		2	1	2	4		21	47
	49	1	1	3	5		1	18	5	4		4			1	4	12	59
Downy Woodpecker	48		4			12	4	38	30	12	4	25	3	9	25		24	190
	49	4	7	36	54	10	3	14	100	30	7	16	12	7	16	8	35	359
Eastern Phoebe	48																1	1
	49															1	9	10
Horned Lark	48							(8)		47			4	3	6		270	330
	49		3		43			1				2	5	16	5	12	64	151
Blue Jay	48		2			2	8	20	20	29	9	17		3	4		5	119
	49	21		1	14	4	3	87	20	6		10	4		2	6		178

Species	Yr.	Gar Co.	Mc Cool	All Co.	Cat Mts.	Hamp- stead	Loc Rav	Tri Res	Patu xent	Acco keek	Wico mico	Anne Arun	Chase	Susq Flats	Kent Is.	Blk wtr	Cris fld.	Ocean City	Total
Crow	48		3				8	6	153	20	218	68	57	51	1190	655		261	2690
	49	29	8	389	1106	10000	62	591	240	30	158		72	64	370	372	162	299	13952
Fish Crow	48													15	2				17
	49				1	3							4	5	8	11	34		66
Carolina Chickadee	48						21	40	116	40	47	13	12	3	25	145		91	553
	49				83	4	3	54	219	35	17		72	10	76	73	58	78	712
Black-capped Chick.	48		6																6
	49	81	17	104	85	1													288
Tufted Titmouse	48		2				5	4	61	60	42	5	17	6	8	90		51	351
	49	2	8	84	56	14		16	113	25	7		34	6	2	6	23	29	425
White-br. Nuthatch	48							4	9	4			8		1			7	33
	49	1		16	15	6	2	2	16				4				6	8	79
Red-br. Nuthatch	48								1						(3)	3			4
	49	3	2	1	1				31	2									40
Brown-headed Nut.	48															57			57
	49															68	13	4	85
Brown Creeper	48		1					4	31	9	4	11	6		1	12		4	83
	49	1		8	15	8		4	42	4			13		1	6	7	10	119
House Wren	48								6	4	1					1		1	2
Winter Wren	48								7	4	3			2		5		11	29
	49		1	3	5	6		3	7	4	3		4	4	1	2	4	13	60
Carolina Wren	48						1	2	9	25	25	10	3		(1)	16		46	137
	49	1	6	28	26	3	2	16	18	30	6		9	5	6	15	30	40	241
Long-b. Marsh Wren	48															30		1	31
	49												3			34	2		39
Short-b. Marsh W.	48														(1)	2		3	5
	49															30	3	3	36
Mockingbird	48		2					1	7	4	23	12	6	2	3	1		5	66
	49		2	1	7		1	13	6	11			2	4	12	2	9	10	88
Catbird	48										1		1			1		5	8
	49																5	2	7
Brown Thrasher	48										1		1					3	5
	49																1		1

Species	Yr.	Gar Co.	Mc Cool	All Co.	Cat Mts.	Hampstead	Loc Rav	Tri Res	Patu xent	Acco keek	Wico mico	Anne Arum	Chase	Susq Flats	Kent Is.	Blk wtr	Cris fld.	Ocean City	Total
Robin	48		2						157		29	6	18			24		77	313
	49		1	4			1		1		14		1		1	2	36	571	632
Hermit Thrush	48							1	2	1	3	1	1	2		4		4	19
	49		4	1				1	8	1	2		2				10	5	34
Eastern Bluebird	48						4	3	16	14	51	3		6	11	34		82	224
	49	2	3	37	22	4	13	86	42	18	27		9	15	24	48	52	82	421
Golden-cr. Kinglet	48								100	7	34	14	6	1	5	52		33	252
	49	11		3	8	3		6	63	4	12		24	1	6	26	2	24	193
Ruby-cr. Kinglet	48								23	1	3	3	6		(1)	12		3	51
	49				1				8	1	6		3			16	1	3	39
Am. Pipit	48								(1)	3	165	6		7	235	30		830	1276
	49							5			78					23	30	226	362
Cedar Waxwing	48								1							10		7	18
	49			2			35	(4)			30		2				17	22	108
Loggerhead Shrike	48							1							1			1	3
	49		2	2		1		3			2					1	1	2	14
Starling	48		6					5	11	75	300	64	37	677	1080	635		448	3338
	49	54	62	621	1432	900		3063	15	55	205		133	1020	24	365	2250	900	11099
Myrtle Warbler	48		2				12		156	2	90	2	12	3	3	1000		162	1434
	49				3		2	1	119		5		26	12	62	1382	528	472	2612
Pine Warbler	49																	1	1
Palm Warbler	48																	3	3
	49								1									6	7
Yellow-throat	48															1			1
English Sparrow	48		65				6	5	2	75	108	55	17	285	57	51		142	868
	49	89	60	220	544	200		186		20	4		40	105	53	83	57	118	1779
E. Meadowlark	48							1	1	120	154	39	1	36	74	142		1028	1596
	49	10			15			122	30	45	13		11	6	101	142	186	401	1089
Red-wing	48								1	10	1500	5	29	800000	3470	1430		790	907235
	49	25		43	25			30		45	123		18	630000	676	12300	6970	189	650444
Rusty Blackbird	48								1						2				4
	49			20													12	39	71
Boat-tailed Grackle	49																45		45

Species	Yr.	Gar Co.	Mc Cool Co.	All Cat Mts.	Hamp- stead	Loc Rav	Tri Res	Patu xent	Acqo keek	Wico mico	Anne Arun	Chase	Susq Flats	Kent Is.	Blk wtr	Cris fld.	Ocean City	Total
Purple Grackle	48												200000	1	20		681	200702
	49			1				2		1			5 70000		2200	477	122	72808
Cowbird	48									95			48	50			517	710
	49	40	7				500						50	100	22	30	318	1067
Cardinal	48		8			11	7	60	75	93	32	32	43	37	22		59	479
	49	4	19	171	129	16	5	31	89	40	19	59	14	12	30	62	111	811
Eve. Grosbeak	49							8										3
Purple Finch	48							1							1		1	3
	49			72	1			70	45	6				9		10	15	228
Pine Siskin	48									4					100		12	116
	49	2																2
Goldfinch	48		3			22	7	92	90	67	7	38	115	29	62		191	723
	49	71	12	62	14	85	55	435	178	60	47	166	135	57	50	69	354	1850
Towhee	48								2	19	2	21	1	1	3		40	89
	49							2		1		1			4	4	26	38
Ipswich Sparrow	48																1	1
	49																2	2
Savannah Sparrow	48							(2)	7	12				19	7		64	109
	49								2				2		32	36	97	169
Sharp-tailed Sp.	48																2	2
	49															1	10	11
Seaside Sparrow	49														7			7
Vesper Sparrow	48														2		13	15
	49																10	10
Slate-col. Junco	48		18			63	36	409	200	256	65	93	91	146	49		435	1866
	49	50	25	277	580	73	27	308	789	250	74	168	75	40	62	40	259	3097
Tree Sparrow	48		8					112	124	14	148	15	76	60	13		20	600
	49	97	26	540	249	102	37	68	220	14			26	27	13	1	47	1467
Chipping Sparrow	48																1	1
	49																10	10
Field Sparrow	48							16	15	30	158	10	14	1	67		181	574
	49		4	29	20	44	4	55	75	40	99		2	10	20	18	58	606

Species	Gar Yr	Mc Co.	Co.	All Co.	Cat Mts.	Hamp- stead	Loc Rav	Tri Res	Patu xent	Acco keek	Wico mico	Anne Arun	Chase	Susq. Flats	Kent Is.	Blk wtr	Cris fld.	Ocean City	Total
White-cr.Sparrow	48		16					(2)											16
	49		25	10	15			(2)											50
White-th.Sparrow	48		3				50	18	64	170	290	34	38	20	52	138		819	1696
	49		8	12	47	23	16	51	169	35	38		137	85	13	105	232	1235	2206
Fox Sparrow	48										1	1		2	1	2		4	11
	49								4		1					6	8	7	26
Lincoln's Sparrow	48																	1	1
Swamp Sparrow	48						5		8		1	2	2		1	86		98	203
	49			1	1	2	1	2	22	3	1		8	1	1	202	31	216	492
Song Sparrow	48		7				17	19	23	90	71	15	6	9	23	152		177	602
	49	1	16	100	67	57	3	62	92	40	61		39	24	51	144	83	249	1089
Snow Bunting	48																	125	125
Total individuals	48		160				359	546	2010	1662	20460	10261	10107	1011883	21641	9064		28446	1116599
	49	630	351	2959	4769	11652	346	6713	3550	1192	8870		14048	732182	24748	26297	12927	20792	872026
Total species	48		20				26	35	49	52	78	55	55	67	75	90		123	725
	49	31	32	46	50	30	26	57	53	50	66		67	63	62	95	93	116	942
No. of persons	48		1				2	2	10	4	6	2	20	4	7	7		11	76
	49	6	3	10	11	3	2	8	8	4	3		20	9	5	10	9	18	119
No. of parties	48		1				1	1	7	2	3	1	4	2	3	4		5	34
	49	3	1	5	4	2	1	3	7	2	1		4	2	2	5	4	9	55
No. of hours	48		7				12	7	55	21	28	10	21	15	29	39		45	344
	49	22	10	35	36	12	10	20	56	23	11		26	25	13	48	33	80	460
No. of miles	48		9				35	15	73	17	187	111	20	140	202	196		191	1196
	49	124	20	190	217	54	30	83	64	16	40		21	186	75	186	141	235	1682

# THE SEASON

January and February 1950

For the second successive year Marylanders experienced an exceptionally warm and open winter. This was a result of unusual persistence of a high-pressure area off the Atlantic coast (known as the Bermuda High), which prevented the normal eastward flow of cold air from the interior of the continent. The month of January was the climax of three months of above-average temperatures. Nearly every day in the month was at least 5° warmer than normal, none was more than 7° below normal, and on several days the mercury soared to record levels. On Jan. 26 the Baltimore Weather Bureau recorded a high of 79°, the highest temperature ever observed there in the month of January; and on the same day Westernport reported 83°, surpassing by 3° the highest temperature ever recorded in Maryland in January. The month ended with an average daily excess of 11.7° for the State as a whole. Starting on the last day of January, the weather took a turn toward the cooler side, but still remained about 5° above average except for brief cold snaps on Feb. 20 and 21 and at the close of the month. February ended with a daily excess of nearly 3°, but a mean temperature 9° below that of the previous month. Snowfall was exceedingly light throughout the State, and at almost every station it melted within 24 hours. Baltimore reported the exceptionally low total of one-half inch for the two-month period.

The effects of this continuous warm weather on our wintering birdlife were fascinating to observe. The lack of hard freezing weather caused many inland ponds to remain open throughout the period, with the result that numbers and variety of waterfowl were much greater than usual on artificial impoundments. The northward shift in the Field Sparrow population was noticed not only in Maryland, but throughout the eastern United States; in its southern wintering grounds the Field Sparrow was reported as scarce, whereas northward a general increase was recorded. Fortunately, nature exerts a stabilizing influence on migratory birds, and, as shown by the recapture of banded birds, many individuals return to the same wintering grounds year after year in spite of drastic changes in weather conditions. So even with two successive mild winters, no major difference was noted in the abundance of the great majority of species, and the number of southern stragglers was small.

There was no time when bird populations were at a standstill. Many of the shorebirds which had been found along the coast in the closing days of December gradually disappeared during January. At the same time, under the influence of warm southerly winds, waterfowl arrived in increasing numbers on inland ponds, Horned Larks started

their spring journey, and several species began their singing and mating activities.

Grebes, Cormorants, Herons. Ordinarily a rare winter resident even in southern Maryland, the Pied-billed Grebe was well distributed throughout tidewater Maryland and was even recorded inland. No less than 85 individuals were enumerated on Christmas Counts at the turn of the year, with smaller numbers remaining throughout the period. Most unexpected was a single individual in a small patch of open water in Deep Creek Lake, Garrett County, on New Year's Day (Low, Packard, Deetz, Robbins). Robert Beaton counted 9 between Chapel Point and Cobb Island, Charles Co., on Jan. 7, and from 1 to 5 birds on 4 trips from mid-January to mid-February. Up to 10 Pied-billed Grebes were seen at Gibson Island all winter (Hendersons). Winter records of cormorants are always of special interest because Maryland lies just outside the usual winter range of both the Double-crested Cormorant and the more northern European Cormorant. Great care must be exercised in identifying all winter cormorants because the two species are very similar and because occasional immature Double-crests closely resemble typical immature Europeans. As yet there is no positive record of the latter species in Maryland, although an immature bird believed to be this species was watched for a half hour at Ocean City Inlet on Feb. 26 by Mary Goldman, Katherine Keeley, Jane Tuttrup, Eleanor Price, and Robbins. Double-crests, which are quite unusual along the Potomac in winter, were found at Cobb Island on Jan. 7 (2 by Francis Uhler, Beaton, and John Taylor) and at Widewater on Jan. 21 (3 adults by David Redfield). In spite of the open winter, no white herons were reported, and the only record of the American Bittern was a bird seen at South Point, Worcester Co., on Jan. 29 by Irston Barnes and Charles Handley, Jr.

Waterfowl. In many cases it has been impossible to distinguish the end of fall migration or the beginning of the spring flight. Even the Shoveller, which normally is very rare and local in Maryland in winter, remained in such numbers this winter that it failed to give any indication of a termination date for the southward flight. On Jan. 28, when the population should have been at its lowest ebb, Barnes counted 27 in the Blackwater-Elliott Island area. By Feb. 25 the Blackwater count had risen to 90 (Audubon trip), suggesting that a spring movement had begun. On the other hand, the arrival of 15 Redheads at Patuxent Refuge on Feb. 28 coincided with the hardest freeze of the season in upstate New York where this species had lingered on due to the open winter; these birds could actually have been completing their interrupted southward migration at this late date. High counts of special interest included 700 Gadwalls at Elliott Island on Feb. 25 (Audubon Society), 320 Old-squaws in St. Mary's County on Feb. 18 (Beaton and Taylor), and 7500 Ruddy Ducks on the Wicomico River in St. Mary's County on Feb. 11 (Beaton and Taylor). The latter observers interviewed a resident of Mills Point on the Wicomico River and were told that there were more ducks on the river this year than at any time during his 15 years in that area. Mrs. Vera Henderson reported that Whistling Swans were more numerous at Gibson Island than in recent years, and that Canvas-backs were especially abundant there throughout the winter. From Feb. 26 on,

Ring-necked Ducks were present by the hundreds at Gibson Island. Rarities included 2 Blue Geese at Berlin throughout the period, and an immature King Eider which was seen at Ocean City Inlet by many observers on Jan. 29 (when accompanied by a female), Feb. 4, Feb. 18, and Feb. 26. Thomas Israel reported the first northward flight of 50 Canada Geese over Laurel on Feb. 9, one of the warmest days of the month.

Vultures and Hawks. Large flocks of Turkey Vultures are seldom observed in mid-winter except on the Eastern Shore or in the immediate vicinity of roosts. Paul Springer and Oscar Warbach counted an exceptionally large flock of 198 birds as they drifted westward over Patuxent Refuge on Jan. 19. Nine days later, John Fales recorded a flock of 46 moving north high over the Woodside section of Silver Spring. Rough-legged Hawks were seen at Bethesda on Jan. 1 (Lawrence Kilham), Catoctin Mountain on Jan. 1 (2 by Miss Burner, Crowder, McHoul and Weaver), and Silver Spring on Feb. 18 (Frank Cross).

Shorebirds and Gulls. The record high numbers of shorebirds which were present along the coast at the close of December gradually dwindled throughout the period. By the last weekend in February even the Red-backed Sandpiper and Sanderling were hard to find. On Jan. 19, however, Mrs. Henderson saw 25 Sanderlings at Gibson Island, establishing the first mid-winter record for the western shore of Chesapeake Bay. She also reported that 2 Wilson's Snipe spent the winter on Gibson Island. Ten Lesser Yellow-legs and one Greater were still present at Blackwater Refuge on Jan. 28 (Barnes). While their relatives continued to depart for the South, the Woodcock and Killdeer began their northward journey. Stewart observed the first flight song of the Woodcock at Patuxent Refuge on the record early date of Jan. 23. Killdeer arrived at Laurel on Jan. 25 (Springer), and at Spencerville on Feb. 3 (Seth Low). A maximum count of 8 Black-backed Gulls was obtained at Gibson Island point on Jan. 14 (Mrs. F. H. Vinup).

Owls. Eleven additional Snowy Owls were reported in January and February, representing all sections of the State. One was killed in the Greenridge area of Allegany County in January and reported to the Game and Inland Fish Commission. Hervey Brackbill reported that one was photographed in northwest Baltimore on Jan. 9, and that another was killed at Stemmers Run in Baltimore County on Feb. 23. On Feb. 14 one was sighted at McDonough School by A. O. Ramsay. Single birds which were shot at Edgewood in Harford County on Jan. 18 and Jan. 21, and at unspecified locations on the Eastern Shore on Jan. 10 and Jan. 12 were taken to a Baltimore taxidermist (reported to Brackbill). The highest count of live birds was a flock of 3 at Mills Point on the Wicomico River in St. Mary's County from Feb. 18 on (Beaton, Elting Arnold, Taylor and others). A Short-eared Owl was noted at Sunshine, Montgomery Co., on Feb. 4 (Low).

Phoebe, Tree Swallow. On Jan. 8, 1949, Napier Shelton and Thomas Donnelly found an Eastern Phoebe at Seneca, the first winter record for Montgomery County. On the same date in 1950, Dr. Lawrence Kilham obtained another record at that locality. The first known

winter occurrences of the Tree Swallow for the Western Shore, due undoubtedly to the very mild winter, were a single bird at Cobb Island, Charles Co., on Jan. 7 (Uhler) and a small flock at Gibson Island on Jan. 15 (Mrs. Henderson).

Crows, Chickadees, Wrens, Mockers. Robert Beaton, who made almost weekly trips to southern Maryland, found Fish Crows to be present in small numbers (2 to 8) throughout the winter along the Wicomico River. Unusual inland records were made on Jan. 2 along the Monocacy River near Lewistown (Robbins), and at Pretty Boy Reservoir (3 birds seen by Stewart). Carolina Chickadees were exceptionally abundant, being more than twice as numerous as usual at Patuxent Refuge. Titmice, on the other hand, were less common. The Long-billed Marsh Wren must be more regular in winter on the Western Shore than the small number of records would indicate. January and February Records are known only from Baltimore County and the lower Eastern Shore. A single individual was noted on Jan. 14, 1950, on the Wicomico River in southern Maryland, by Mr. Beaton. New wintering localities for the Catbird were established by Paul Springer and Mrs. Vinup, who noted single birds at Patuxent Refuge on Jan. 20 and Gibson Island on Jan. 3, respectively. John W. Taylor, Jr., found a Brown Thrasher wintering at Thomas Point on Jan. 28; this species is more frequently found in the Ocean City area, where Brooke Meanley and Gorman Bond observed one on Feb. 5.

Robin, Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Robins wintered through the entire Coastal Plain and less commonly in the Piedmont and Ridge and Valley sections of the State. The first definite spring movement was noted at Beltsville and Middle River on Feb. 23 (John Fales, Edwin Willis). Wintering Ruby-crowned Kinglets were found north to Beltsville, Patuxent Refuge and Middle River.

Warblers. Myrtle Warblers wintered throughout the Coastal Plain. As early as Feb. 4, 25 suddenly appeared at Unity, Montgomery Co. (Low), and from the 11th on, they became more frequent at Middle River (Willis). A Yellow Palm Warbler was still present at Unity on Feb. 5, providing the first mid-winter record of this warbler on the Piedmont Plateau of Maryland.

Finches. Evening Grosbeaks were found as far south as Cabin John (8 on Jan. 28, Jeanne Stivers, Allen Stickley; 10 on Feb. 28, Mrs. Leo Russell) and Fort Washington (7 on Feb. 18, James Stevenson). 200 Pine Siskins were noted at Bittering, Brookmont (Frank E. Sanderson), Beltsville, Patuxent Refuge and Middle River. Towhees wintered north to Hagerstown (Mrs. R. S. Stauffer), Chevy Chase and Patuxent Refuge.

Sparrows. Two Ipswich Sparrows were well seen on Jan. 29 at South Point by Barnes and C. O. Handley, Jr. This is our only record away from the ocean dunes except for a casual spring occurrence 30 years ago on the West River in Anne Arundel County (Westmore, Auk 44: 256-257). A seaside Sparrow seen in the Elliott Island marshes on Feb. 25 (Robbins) is the northernmost record of definite wintering in the Chesapeake marshes. Residents in the Piedmont and Ridge and Valley sections found Field Sparrows widely distributed this winter; for

the first time reports of Field Sparrows were received from all counties in these sections. White-crowned Sparrows wintered once more at McCool (Llewellyn), and increased to at least 7 at Derwood (Jane Tuttrup). A flock of 15 was seen on Jan. 2 near Creagerstown, Frederick Co. (Martha Stauffer, Mrs. R. S. Stauffer, Bill Green, and Robbins). The Fox Sparrow migration started early, under influence of spring-like weather; a flock of 12 was seen at Patuxent Refuge on Jan. 23 (Stewart), and one at Middle River on the 26th (Willis).

Singing activities. Although the Carolina Wren and Tufted Titmouse frequently sing on warm days even in the middle of winter, the great majority of wintering species do not commence to give their spring songs until their migration begins or until they start to set up breeding territories or select their mates. An abnormally warm season, such as that experienced this winter, causes some birds to burst into song prematurely on the warmest days, then remain silent during subsequent cool spells. Birds in the southern part of the State frequently sing at earlier dates than those further north or west. A Field Sparrow, for example, was heard singing at Plum Point in Calvert County as early as Feb. 5 (Fales); Frank Cross first heard one at Silver Spring on Feb. 11; Willis, however, who made daily observations at Middle River, did not hear them any time during the period. Fales heard a Carolina Chickadee sing at Beltsville on Jan. 18, but at Middle River they were heard only on Feb. 11, the warmest day of the month. Song Sparrows began regular singing on Jan. 16 in Laurel (Springer) and on Jan. 25 at Middle River. No territories were definitely established at Middle River until Feb. 4, but by the end of the month nearly every suitable territory was occupied (Willis).

Chandler S. Robbins

#### WINTER BIRD POPULATION STUDY - 1950

Mixed Oak Forest. Location: On the campus of Goucher College, Towson, Baltimore Co., Maryland. Size: 40 acres. Description: The area has been well described in connection with previous studies; see, Audubon Field Notes, 2:234 (1948) and 3:189 (1949). Coverage: Jan. 1, 2, 7 (two trips), 14, 15, 21, 22; total 8 trips averaging 2 hours each. Hours ranged from 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Census: (first figure is average number of birds seen on the area per trip; the figure in parentheses gives the calculated number per hundred acres): Junco, 3 (8); Tufted Titmouse, 2 (5); White-breasted Nuthatch, 2 (5); Downy Woodpecker, 2 (5); Crow, 2 (5); Brown Creeper, 1 (3); Goldfinch, 1 (3); White-throated Sparrow, +; Red-tailed Hawk, +; Carolina Chickadee, +; Hairy Woodpecker, +. Remarks: January 1950 was the mildest January on record in the Baltimore region. Daily mean temperatures averaged 12.5 degrees above the normal daily means. Only 4 days had means below the normal, and means above the normal ranged to 31 degrees. The lowest temperature recorded during the month was 23 degrees, the highest was 79 degrees. Bird counts were very low except for one trip. This condition may be explainable on the basis that the mildness of the weather did not encourage bird activity on which bird observation largely depends. The position of the Junco on the list is due to wandering flocks; many birds apparently did not settle down to a definite winter range.

Haven Kolb and Richard Cole

## OCEAN CITY &amp; BLACKWATER, FEB. 18-19, 1950

A bird trip to the Eastern Shore of Maryland usually provides a good variety of species as well as one or two rarer finds. This week-end visit was no exception. Fourteen people travelled to Ocean City Friday night and were greeted by bright sunny weather the next morning. Led by Mr. & Mrs. Clark Webster, the group visited first the inlet, site of many ornithological discoveries. There we were fortunate in observing an immature male eider which was finally determined to be a King Eider. Other interesting species seen in the vicinity were Red-throated Loons, American Brant, Black-backed Gulls, and all three species of scoters.

We then proceeded south to the Newport Bay area where we visited the estate of Mr. H. W. Heine. He generously devoted his time to showing us his fresh water impoundment which contained a large number of waterfowl made up chiefly of Canada Geese. Grazing with them on a grassy hillside, however, were both an immature Snow Goose and an adult Blue Goose. In addition, there was a good variety of puddle and diving ducks, among which were many Canvas-backs as well as a good number of Shovellers in full breeding plumage which showed off to advantage in the bright sunlight. But the biggest thrill of all was a male European Teal in company with a flock of his Green-winged relatives where the differences in the white bar markings could be compared easily.

The next day was cold with a slight drizzle and not conducive to birding, but Savannah Sparrows and a wintering Clapper Rail were added to the list before we left Ocean City. At the Pocomoke River we added many woodland birds, including the Pileated Woodpecker and four other species of the woodpecker family.

Our next stop was Blackwater Refuge, where we saw several new species of waterfowl, 3 Brown-headed Nuthatches, and roused a Barn Owl from his roost inside the cabin of one of the observation towers. The trip was a good one for waterfowl, with 26 species being observed, even though such common ducks as the Redhead and Ruddy were missed. In all, 94 species were seen on the 2-day trip.

Paul F. Springer

## ANNE ARUNDEL BIRD CLUB BECOMES A REALITY

Under the very energetic guidance of Col. and Mrs. Frederick H. Vinup, the Anne Arundel Bird Club became the sixth Local Unit of the Society at its organization meeting on February 7. Col. Vinup presided as Chairman reported on preliminary organization discussions, and appointed essential committees. State President Crowder described the activities and organizational set-ups of other Local Units, and answered numerous questions. Twenty-one persons attended the meeting, held in the Club House at Gibson Island. It was agreed that the club should be county-wide, and should be a unit of the State Society. Meetings are to be held at Gibson Island for the present, but alternate meetings at Annapolis were under consideration for the future.